

Image of the Other.
Academic Dialogue in the Post-Soviet Space

Joint project

of the

Institute of Education Development

and

Kennan Institute (Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars, Washington
D.C.)

Fall 2018 – Winter 2019

The project goals and objectives

The project aim is to respond to the above needs and to mobilize the scholarly community for combatting the spread of xenophobia, ethnic, cultural, gender and other forms of intolerance manifested through use and abuse of the image of the Other.

Public goal of this project is the representation of balanced, scholarly grounded approach, unbiased mode of thinking and impartial style of the speech addressing highly controversial and politically manipulated problems and issues related to use and abuse of the image of 'the Other'.

The project was focused on three major objectives:

1. To organize large scale systemic research effort aimed at:

a) analysis and deconstruction of cultural, social, ethnic, gender, racial stereotypes (this will begin with an identification of current events, the analysis of which promises to yield a deeper understanding of a larger set of similar events.)

b) analysis and deconstruction of political strategies, discourses, manipulative technologies aimed at creation, use, misuse and abuse of the image of 'the Other.' (Since the process of imagining 'the Other' is familiar human tendency that does not in every instance result in violence and repression, the analysis will also seek to identify situations of multicultural contact and coexistence that exemplifies living with difference.)

c) creating forums for the expression of opinion and articulating attitudes of international scholarly communities on these issues, in communication with civil society – independent media, scholarly circles, non-governmental organizations.

Implementation

To reach these objectives it was planned to organize three interdisciplinary seminars in the regions and one concluding round-table in Kyiv. Three regions were selected: Odessa, Lviv and Kharkiv. The selection of regions was based on the idea of intervention in localities which seem to be most ‘problematic’ in terms of exploitation of the image of the Other for political goals.

Initially it was planned that each seminar will have certain disciplinary focus: media, history, sociology. After further consultation with stakeholders and experts it was decided to shift the focus on interdisciplinary approach

All seminars focused on the same set of problems:

- what stereotypes of the Other are common for the Ukrainian society
- how these stereotypes are used, misused and abused by politicians, public figures, at the everyday life level?
- how these stereotypes can be deconstructed and analyzed?
- What are sociological/societal/cultural dimensions of the Other?
- How the Other presented in educational practices?

Three seminars took place in scheduled time:

Seminar in Odessa 30 October, 2018 in cooperation with I. Mechnikov Odessa National University and regional office of the International Renaissance Foundation

Participants

Olena Babakova, free-lance journalist, Warsaw (columnist at Ukrainska Pravda, Novoe Vriemia, hromadske, ZIK, Focus etc.)

Victor Stepanenko, Institute of Sociology, National Academy of Sciences (NAS)

Petro Kenzior, Association of Teachers of History and Social Sciences ‘Nova Doba’

Georgiy Kasianov, Institute of the History of Ukraine (NAS)

Oleksii Matsuka, Head Editor, Informational Agency ‘Donbass News’

Svitlana Chunikhina, psychologist, Association of Political Psychologists of Ukraine

Twenty six people presented: media, local NGOs, teachers, universities staff.

Olena Babakova talked about perceptions of Poles/Poland in Ukraine and Ukrainians in Poland. According to her observations, the Ukrainians are generally perceived positively in Poland, however, in recent years the anti-Ukrainian stereotypes revived- mostly due to two major factors: discussions over the past and activities of the right-wing organizations. She mentioned the rise of conservatism, populism and right-wing activism as a precondition to the tension in the Ukrainian-Polish relations. In Ukraine, the Poles are still considered as forerunners in reforms and Poland looks like one of the most attractive countries in terms of labor migration. Anti-Polish moods can be detected in Western Ukraine, they mostly instrumentalized by right-wing parties and do not affect the whole citizenry even in this region.

Victor Stepanenko presented sociological surveys that show gradual growth of xenophobia and intolerance in Ukraine towards ethnic Other in the last decade. He explained this with the war in the East. He also mentioned that the level of xenophobia and intolerance is higher in rural areas, while urban areas, particularly megapolises are less affected. (the Bogardus scale was used)

Svetlana Chunikhina commented on psychological dimensions of the use and misuse of the image of the Other. She noted the general rise of intolerance in society and a growing level of psychotic reactions among 'average' people and politicians. She commented, that politicians gladly use different techniques of Othering without calculating the possible consequences of these practices. She also mentioned the spread of a hate speech in media.

Aleksei Matsuka paid major attention to the techniques of the othering in media and social media. He shared his personal experience in combatting the dissemination of the stereotypes about 'easterners' (Donbass area inhabitants). He also commented on the activities of the Ukrainian major media (TV) aimed at representing 'the East' in terms that make problematic future 're-integration of Donbass'. He paid some attention to the techniques of othering and psychological war in social media (uses of bots)

Petro Kendzior talked about a new educational program introduced by the Ministry of Education and Science at secondary schools: 'Civic education' course. A part of this course designed to introduce concepts of tolerance, dialogue, and

understanding in teaching. He stated that this course is at the very start and it would not be considered as a 'cure' because some other school courses (History for instance) should be analyzed and evaluated in terms of tolerance and civic dialogue.

Georgiy Kasianov commented on the use and misuse of the image of the Other in the politics of history. The major concern now is a Polish-Ukrainian debate on the past which affects Polish-Ukrainian relations. Another problematic area - expansion of the nationalist mythology of the past which follows so-called 'decommunization' which practically alienates a considerable part of the population in the East and South-East from state policies and the state itself, invests into divisions between certain regions of Ukraine

Seminar in Lviv, 9 November, 2018, in co-operation with Lviv Center for Urban Studies and Ukrainian Catholic University

Participants

Victoria Vengerska, historian, Zhytomyr State Pedagogical University

Oleksandr Zaitsev, historian, Ukrainian Catholic University

Maksym Gon, historian, Rivne State Humanities University

Georgiy Kasianov, historian, National Academy of Sciences, Institute of the History of Ukraine

Vasyl' Rasevych, historian, Internet resource ZAXID.NET , історик, Захід.net

Iryna Sklokina, historian, Ukrainian Catholic University Ірина Склокіна,

Yevhen Bystrytsky, philosopher, Institute of Philosophy, National Academy of Sciences

Victoria Sereda, sociologist, Ukrainian Catholic University

Seventeen people presented, I. Franko Lviv National University, local NGOs, journalists

Victoria Vengerska discussed the problems of teaching history and other humanities disciplines in schools and universities in the context of representation and interpretation of the image of the Other. She commented the contradiction

between declared academic freedom and growing pressure from the state resulting in further regulations of interpretations in teaching history. For instance, according to the instructions from the Ministry of Education and Sciences the interpretation of the Soviet period has been reduced exclusively to the terms ‘occupation’, ‘colonial domination’. Ukraine presented only as a victim, whole Soviet period presented as a black hole. The same paradigm extended to the teaching of the history of Ukraine in the pedagogical universities and colleges. The Other presented in the textbook mostly as an evil force.

Oleksandr Zaitsev paid major attention to the discourses of the Other in public representations of history. He admitted the growth of intolerance and hate speech in the public discussions about the past. At the moment two evil external Others presented in the public discourse: Russia, as an internal oppressor and aggressor, and Poland. Generally the process and practices of ‘the othering’ are based predominantly on negative stereotypes. He also mentioned the lack of systemic analytical effort in the field regarding images and representations of the Other.

Georgiy Kasianov talked about the most recent public and political debates over the past that enhance internal divisions in Ukraine. He analyzed the results of sociological polls devoted to the attitudes towards interpretations of the past in the current politics of history. The major tendency – expansion of the nationalist narrative of the past to Central Ukraine and growing dissatisfaction with this in Eastern and South Easter Ukraine. He also commented on Ukrainian – Polish memory war in 2015 – 2018.

Vasyl Rasevych presented his vision of the regional divisions over interpretations of the past, focusing mostly on Western Ukraine, primarily – Galicia. He pointed out, that images of the regions in public discourse (political, historical, media) are based almost exclusively on negative stereotypes. He admits that Western-Ukrainian or Galician narrative of memory is now actively being imposed to the whole Ukraine. Moreover, the role of Galicia as the region with exclusive role in nation-building and its vision of the past presented and promoted as the only true legitimate version. He commented, that the othering, based on negative stereotypes of the regions invests into the internal conflict.

Iryna Sklokina devoted her report to the othering of Donbass. She focused on two types of stereotypes of Donbass: 1) those invented and cherished by Donbass elites, based on the idea of self-othering 2) stereotypes of Donbass created by elites

of other regions of Ukraine. She discussed the problem of social and cultural segregation, paternalism and patrimonialism related to these stereotypes. She also made suggestions about diversity of self-representations in Donbass itself, arguing that the whole region could not be packed into one single representation of the Self and the Other.

Victoria Sereda shared the results sociological reviews and opinion polls taken in the course of the project Ukraine of Regions, supported by the Swiss federal government. She signaled the lack of sociological research and data devoted to the 'otherness'. Concentrating mostly on teachers of history as a focus group, she commented, that teachers of history are themselves bearers of ethnic stereotypes, that they are quite indifferent or even resistant to the problems of tolerance in teaching. However, those teachers who ran through different trainings devoted to the awareness building about othering, tolerance, preventions of xenophobia, are more advanced in this respect. She mentioned that sociological research now might be complicated by external factor: dissemination of the questionnaire among teachers provoked a counter-action from the Security Service of Ukraine.

Maksym Gon stated that Ukraine lacks the tradition of the presence of the Other in a positive context. The state of professional training of teachers of history and humanities might be a biggest problem: majority of teachers is not interested in further professional development, they want instructions from the above. The whole paradigm of teaching history just changed from Glory to CPSU to Glory to Nation. He also commented the problem of internalization of Holocaust. The most conventional view is that commemoration of the Holocaust is a business of Jewish community in Ukraine.

Yevhen Bystrytsky proposed to consider the practices of the othering in the context of identity building process. Identity as such springs out at the moment of comparison and juxtaposition if not confrontation. Therefore, the collective identity builds up on the premises of self-preservation and self-defense. The othering is often perceived and conceived as a manifestation of existential enmity in categories of friends versus enemies. To overcome this situation and practice it is important to deconstruct related discourses, to study their social, cultural, historical roots and to explain them to the active part of society.

Seminar in Kharkiv planned for December 2018 was re-scheduled for 8 February 2019 due to martial law initiated by the president and introduced by the parliament in October 2018.

Seminar in Kharkiv was organized in cooperation with V. Karazin National University. Prior to the seminar G. Kasianov visited the site to observe situation.

Participants

Oleksii Muziezdov, sociologist, V. Karazin Kharkiv National University

Olga Filippova, sociologist, V. Karazin Kharkiv National University

Yulia Soroka, sociologist, V. Karazin Kharkiv National University

Andrii Artemenko, philosopher, Kharkiv State Academy of Culture

Halyna Fesenko, culture studies, Kharkiv National University of Urban Economy

Serhii Posokhov, historian, V. Karazin Kharkiv National University

Georgiy Kasianov, historian, Institute of the History of Ukraine, NAS

Thirty seven people presented from four Kharkiv universities, NGOs, media

A.Artemenko talked about othering as an identity problem. By definition, the number of Others is bigger, than the number of Us. The term and the concept of the Other is not just an emotional, irrational phenomenon, it is intimately linked to very practical considerations, including instrumentalization of the image of the Other. In concrete terms Ukraine follows the scenario of transforming of the Other into Alien. The concept of ‘two Ukraines’ that emerged at the beginning of 2000s can be considered as a starting point of this process. The interaction between Us and Others might be presented as a competition between different utopias/projects. Problems arise when one of utopias/projects wins.

O. Musiezdov commented the problem of the Other in the context of recent (post-Maidan) developments in Kharkiv. Despite its density the urban space represents the external unity of very diverse groups. In the Winter 2013 – 2014 both pro-Maidan and anti-Maidan groups, locating very close to each other were aware of the otherness of their counterparts and at the same time knew very few about each other. According to the sociological surveys the ‘aboriginal’ Kharkiv inhabitants (those who lived here for at least two generations) predominated among Maidan supporters, while newcomers (first generation) were a majority among anti-Maidan protesters.

S. Posokhov devoted his report to the images of the Other in the school history textbooks. His main findings: history textbooks can serve as an excellent source for the study of ethnic, cultural and gender stereotypes; the discourse of ethnic diversity and multiculturalism is almost absent; most often used words – ‘struggle’ and ‘nationalism’. 77,8% of mentions of ethnicity are about Ukrainians, 17,3% - about Russians, the rest is for the ‘others’; all historical events and facts explained and interpreted through the prism of the ‘Ukrainian interest’ other ethnic groups either just mentioned or presented as negative Other; Russians and Poles presented mostly in a negative context as oppressors.

Y. Soroka spoke about manipulations with the image of the Other and use of the hate speech. The Other can be a part of one’s own community, the ‘own Other’ and remote Other should be distinguished. The hate speech proliferates in the recent years as a tool of symbolic power as well as a reaction to the threats. At the time of the conflict the hate speech goes beyond the margins of the space of the conflict itself. The war in Donbass provoked the constitution of another Other – an internally displaced persons. It is important to consider different forms of othering in dynamics, they are not stable, fixated. The need for clear and comprehensive definition (legal, sociological) of the hate speech and public discussion on the topic is an urgent need.

G. Kasianov talked about practices of the othering through the state politics of history. He presented several cases of state-supported othering that lead to internal divisions and conflicts (part of ‘decommunization’ process) as well as to international conflicts (the Ukrainian – Polish case). Current state politics of history aimed in homogenization of the cultural/political space can be considered as a manifestation and implementation of the interests of a small group of interest who gained power in the specialized state institutions. This group does not have a permanent access to the top power positions thus it uses very intensive methods of politics to be in time.

Olga Filippova stressed the importance of interdisciplinary dialogue in the studies of the Other. She analyzed the processes of the othering in the borderzone/frontier regions. Karkiv represents the area with double frontier: between Ukraine and Russia, and between Ukraine and occupied territories. The war at Donbass in fact has drawn the real borders both between the regions and peoples. As a result, the demand for ‘purer identity’ formulated at the level of state policy leads to the emergence of a new internal Other.

Outcomes

Nineteen experts took part in three events in Ukraine and three events outside the country, twenty two reports presented. General number of attendants of the events in Ukraine – eighty, additional audience includes students (guest lecture in Odessa), general public (interviews to media)

Twelve papers presented for publication at this moment. It is planned to prepare a special issue of the *Ideology and Politics* based on these papers. Publication of selected papers in English is a need, perhaps as a collected volume.

The project findings were also partly delivered at the Kennan conference in Sarajevo, at the meeting of Ukrainian and Russian historians in St. Polten, Austria (October 2018), at the Petrach Symposium at George Washington University (November 2018) at the ASEES Convention in Boston (December 2018), at the international conference ‘Ukraine and Its Neighbors: Cross-Cultural and Intercultural Interactions’, Naples, January 2019.

General findings and recommendations

1. The problem of the othering is now a part of the policies of central authorities to impose language question and problems of the past as central to the identity formation.
2. The othering based on these premises brings conflict and internal divisions. Ukraine presents a case of persistent divisions over the past, language issues, attitudes towards internal and external Other, heavily instrumentalized by the groups of interest, discourse-mongers, mnemonic actors
3. The education system does not provide sufficient basis for prevention and combatting xenophobia, cultural and ethnic tolerance. Moreover, in some cases it cultivates ethnic exclusivity and othering based on ethnic and cultural stereotypes, it prevents the development of critical thinking.
4. There is a need in further and more massive and continuous effort in public 'deconstruction' of the discourses and practices aimed in search of the 'internal Other'

5. There is a need in a more focused work on media literacy with the young generation, particularly at the level of schools and higher education institutions
6. People are tired of hate speech and propaganda in media. There is a need in further deconstruction of related discourses, identification of interest groups and actors who stay behind these practices. These findings should be presented both to broader public and to professional community.
7. Further activities with this project should be focused on spatial expansion. Central Ukraine and South-East should be in the focus at this time for the following reasons: first, they lack a high quality academic discussion due to the low level of academic mobility. Few advanced scholars in these regions should be supported by visits of the scholars of the same level from other regions, and, probably from outside Ukraine. Second, these regions now affected by the expansion of the nationalist narrative (not to be confused with classic national one) – in the case of Central Ukraine, and by hidden restoration of the Soviet-nostalgic narrative. No positive practices of balanced academic discussions on conflict topics presented there.
8. Further awareness building at the level of public discussion is an urgent need.
9. If possible (in terms of finance) the project should be extended beyond Ukraine. For instance we can try to cooperate with some Polish academic and governmental institutions to reach beyond the circle of ‘usual suspects’ in the Polish – Ukrainian historical debate. There is also a need to sustain the dialogue with Russian colleagues, however, immediate contact (seminars, working meetings) at this moment are possible on ‘neutral territories’ only.